

# BRICKS & MORTAR or RENT SUBSIDIES?

## Future Directions in Affordable Housing



### WEDNESDAY MAY 2, 2012



Lower Mainland Network  
for Affordable Housing



Lions Gate  
Building Society





## KATHERINE SANFORD HOUSING SOCIETY

Who we are:

- Non profit society established in 1989
- Mandate to provide supportive housing to individuals with mental illness, addictions & homeless
- Specialize in development and property management
- Own and operate 21 supported housing projects in Vancouver/ Richmond
- Partner with various service providers – Kettle, MPA, Coast, Portland, RainCity



## HEALTH AND HOUSING – BEST PRACTICES

Research shows:

- Stable supportive living environment essential to maintaining health and well-being
- Integral to recovery for people with serious mental illness
- Decreases need for emergency and other treatment services
- Provides greater sense of satisfaction
- Increases feelings of safety and security
- Increases likelihood of community involvement/ integration



## SUPPORTED HOUSING – BEST PRACTICES

- Supported housing considered a best practice model
- Has demonstrated positive outcomes for both individuals and the community
- Involves providing choice and a continuum of affordable housing options
- Meets specific individual needs at a given time



## TYPES OF SUPPORTED HOUSING

### **Two main categories- Purpose Built/ Dedicated Buildings & Individual Subsidies**

#### Purpose Built/ Dedicated Buildings

- Subsidy tied to program/ unit
- May be larger or smaller apartment buildings or group homes
- Majority of tenants receive support
- Supports can vary from light housekeeping to enhanced medication support and meal program

#### Advantages

- Provides option for those who prefer a congregate setting
- Provides greater opportunity for support and social interaction, community building
- Rents are stable and geared to income
- Ability to provide more program options
- Building can be dedicated for specific populations/programs (e.g. alcohol/ drug free)

#### Disadvantages

- Stigma associated for some individuals
- Limited flexibility in program selection
- Limited availability often results in inappropriate placements
- Trend towards larger projects result in lower levels of support



## TYPES OF SUPPORTED HOUSING

### Individual Subsidies

- Typically scattered apartments in market housing
- Individuals receive subsidy and varying levels of support (e.g. SIL or SUPERSIL)

### Advantages

- Provides options for individuals not wanting to live in dedicated buildings
- Support can be tailored to individual needs
- Allows for greater independence
- Greater choice of housing types/ neighbourhoods
- Same individuals benefit by social interaction/ social control

### Disadvantages

- Tendency for individuals to get isolated
- Can result in more frequent evictions
- Requires active and specialized support
- Fewer program options
- No control over cost increases(e.g.. Rent, utilities)
- No correspondence subsidy increases



## Summary

- Best practice requires provision of a range of housing options
- Purpose built housing and rent subsidies have their advantages and disadvantages
- Both options are required in the continuum to meet individual needs
- Reality is current lack of housing options/ availability do not meet best practices

## What is needed

- Increase in purpose built supported housing units
- Additional subsidies for individuals
- More affordable rental housing across the spectrum
- Income increases for individuals in core need
- Community based supports available regardless of housing status